

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 9999 09929 006 4

5

5

No. 2

RULES AND SUGGESTIONS

FOR

VISITORS OF THE ASSOCIATED CHARITIES.

BOSTON, DECEMBER, 1879.

Wright & Potter Printing Company, 79 Milk Street, Boston.

INTRODUCTION.

You promise to give no money, or its equivalent, to the families you visit, —

(1.) Because the many relief-giving societies of Boston employ agents and visitors in each district, who relieve the deserving poor.

(2.) And because the object which *you* have in view as a visitor to the poor, is to use time, strength, and your best endeavor to raise them to self-dependence and thrift.

You aim to graduate them from the rolls of relief, and also prevent their children from falling into need.

If they cannot live without alms, either because too old, ill, or feeble, or from any other good cause, you encourage them to feel that to one person they can turn for counsel as from a friend, without being supposed to ask relief, — and thus preserve their self-respect.

SIX RULES FOR VISITORS

OF THE

ASSOCIATED CHARITIES OF BOSTON.

I.

As visitors of this society, you must give no money, or its equivalent, unless in cases of absolute and immediate suffering, — except on consultation with your Conference.

II.

Report at stated times, either in writing or person, to your district Conference.

III.

Do not use your position for any purposes of proselytism.

IV.

Always approach a family in every call, and especially in your first visit, with *delicacy, tact, respect, and sympathy.*

V.

Do not disclose, either to the poor themselves, or to any person not charitably interested in the case, the source of information given you through this Society; and the information itself, when unfavorable, should be used with great discretion.

Do not show your visitor's blank, nor take notes in the homes of the poor.

VI.

Do not announce yourself as a visitor of any charitable organization but as a *friend* or neighbor anxious to know those among whom you live; or, if possible, as one bringing work, or desiring to aid them to find work.

SUGGESTIONS.

Study the family and the *causes of their need*. Insist on temperance, industry, thrift, and neatness. Encourage progress. Aid them to make their homes more tasteful and attractive. The gift of a growing plant, or a colored print for their walls, or the loan of a book, may raise their standard of life in a simple and wholesome way. To the sick or aged, some little comfort will not be amiss.

Learn what are the family's means of support, and from what charities they receive relief. Make boys or girls, over fourteen years old, work; and if possible in a trade where skill is well paid. Let them come to your house occasionally to report progress. Interest their employer.

Teach in season and out of season, that if a man will *resolve* to be industrious, and will become a skilled workman in his trade, or a woman in hers, or boys and girls in theirs, steadier and better paid employment can be procured.

Remember, that while a kindly impulse may prompt you to give relief, your duty to the family requires you to consider their moral good, and not the gratification of your own emotions. Relief is easy to give. Permanent improvement is slow and hard to effect. Let no boy or girl grow up a pauper.

In all cases where distress is due to thriftlessness, indolence, or blamable inefficiency, visitors must remember that gratuitous relief is not only prohibited, but that in nine cases out of ten it is positively hurtful, fostering these very faults, lessening self-respect and self-reliance, and injuring character. Suggest work. Find it, if possible. Insist on it; but beware *not to let them rely* on your finding it for them.

So far as gratuitous relief is needed, it must come from existing relieving societies, or with the approval of the District Conference. Do not encourage families receiving relief, to ask or expect more than the experienced visitors of these other societies are giving. Aim to make it less, and as soon as may be, none at all.

A visitor will do harm if he makes the poor *discontented*. Their lot is hard enough. Do not make it harder. Close rooms, poor fare, thin clothes, they are too often accustomed to.

There is one great want in the life of the poor which we do not sufficiently understand—the want of healthful amusement. Crowded rooms and general discomfort drive many a man to the rum-shop, and young persons to unhealthy entertainments. Pleasant occasions might be arranged by the visitors, which should give their poor friends something to look forward to from one week or month to another. A good laugh is a good thing. Help them to forget for a time their hard lot.

Visitors may often wisely influence a wife to keep her rooms and children neat, that her husband may enjoy staying at home more.

Wherever a family — especially with children — is in a foul tenement or foul neighborhood, a visitor can perhaps do nothing so wise as to urge (and aid) them to move into healthy rooms in a good street.

Inexperienced visitors are often — very often — deceived, especially if the poor think they have anything to gain. The confession of an experienced visitor is always how often he has been deceived.

Be careful, *but do not show suspicion.*

Before you visit a family, it will be wise to see or write to the visitor who has given them relief.

Information concerning the Dispensary Physicians, Overseers of the Poor, Police Officers, City Missionaries, Missionaries at Large and Almoners of Charities, asylums and hospitals which relieve special cases, may be found in the Directory of the Charitable and Beneficent Organizations of Boston, just published, December, 1879, which every visitor is advised to get and study

Every citizen of Boston, and especially every visitor, should know the Wayfarers' Lodge, for men, on Hawkins Street, and the Temporary Home for Women on Chardon Street. Men and women can here get bed, bath and food, paying for them by work.

QUOTATIONS.

Give no alms to vicious persons, if such alms will support their sin, or, if they will continue in idleness. "If they will not work, neither let them eat."—*Jeremy Taylor.*

I believe our irregular alms to the occupant of the miserable room, to the shoeless flower-seller, are tending to keep a whole class on the very brink of pauperism who might be taught self-control and foresight, if we would let them learn it.

Let us imagine a case where we give to a man whose income is small. What is the effect on his character of these irregular doles? Do they not lead him to trust to them, to spend up to the last penny what he earns, and hope for help when work slackens or altogether fails? Does he try, cost what it may, to provide for sickness, for times when trade is dull and employment scarce? —*Octavia Hill.*

As wonderful and incongruous things are done in the name of charity as were ever perpetrated in that of liberty. If always twice blessed in spirit, it is often twice cursed in effect.

If it covers a multitude of sins in those who give, it too often in another and worse sense covers a multitude of sins in those upon whom it is bestowed. To the worthless scheming poor, it is a cloak for and incentive to, the sins of lying and idleness, and although they do not see it in

that light, it is a curse to them in that it does incite them to those sins — it makes their lives morally degraded, prevents the development of any germ of human nobility or spirit of independence that might be in their nature.— *Thomas Wright.*

Do not fear that such needy persons as you refuse to relieve are left to starve ; they are simply left to apply in another quarter for the relief which the law provides for them.— *Hints to District Visitors, Rev. F. Hessey, D. C. L.*

Let the head hold in check the heart — refuse all street charity, all relief to that demoralized multitude who spend their lives in going, with artfully devised tales of woe, from house to house, and from society to society. School yourselves into more rational methods, and let the time come to an end when the accomplished cheat is filled with good things, while the deserving poor are sent empty away.— *Rev. S. Humphreys Gurteen, M. A.*

Mendicancy has become a profession and the study of pauperism a science. Now, the unnatural increase of the dependent classes, fostered by ourselves from a mistaken view of charity, demands, to stem its current, associated, organized effort of the highest ability ; demands also, that, stripped of its false garb of almsgiving, raised from its low estimate of money value, charity itself shall be redeemed, restored, both in word and in deed to its original meaning of love. “And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, * * * and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing,” says St. Paul. How far have we wandered from that early teaching, when we use the words charity and almsgiving as synonymous terms ! — *Louisa Lee Schuyler.*

“Societies are hard,” say the poor. “Charity pauperizes,” says the political economist. Yes, there are societies which are hard, and there is a so-called charity which is weakness. But a society which reaches the poor through the warm hearts of hundreds of volunteer visitors cannot become a machine ; and the charity which strives to follow in the footsteps of the Master, will learn from Him that the truest love will be as firm as it is gentle, and can never become weak.— *Louisa Lee Schuyler.*

Love and wisdom combined are the great regenerators of mankind.— *Susan H. Lesley.*

Never allow your love for the poor to degenerate into weak sentiment, or consider a poor man exempt in any way from doing *all* he can to earn for himself and his family an independent living.— *T. F. Ring's Essay on the St. Vincent de Paul, read before the Catholic Union.*

Be always respectful in manner to those whom you visit, remembering that you have no more right to enter their rooms without their consent, than they have to enter yours.— *Dr. Hessey.*

Do not force your presence upon those who show unwillingness to receive your visits. But express to them in a friendly manner your readiness to call again, if they should hereafter wish it.— *Dr. Hessey.*

Never state the object of a visit as being to see whether any relief is wanted, for the visits of one who is regarded only as a person from whom something is to be got, are rather worse than useless.—*Dr. Hessey.*

Avoid anything like dictation in any suggestions, however valuable, that you have to make; and be careful not to make such suggestions in the presence of neighbors, or even of the children of the family.—*Dr. Hessey.*

Beware of any appearance of ill-temper or impatience in your behavior towards the poor.—*Dr. Hessey.*

Combine patience and courtesy with discrimination and firmness.—*C. B. P. Bosanquet, M. A.*

Instead of reproving and fault-finding,—encourage.

Approach these poor women as sisters. Learn lovingly and patiently, (aye, and reverently, for there is that in every human being which deserves reverence, and must be revered, if we wish to understand it;) learn, I say, to understand their troubles, and by that time, they will have learned to understand your remedies. For you *have* remedies.—*Charles Kingsley.*

Do not expect always gratitude from those whom you have benefited; and where it is not shown do not conclude invariably that it is not felt.—*Dr. Hessey.*

Never take squalidness as an evidence of want, or neatness as an evidence of plenty.—*Boston Provident Association.*

Keep those whom you visit informed of their rights and duties as to removal of dust, and other sanitary provisions; and if you observe any serious sanitary defect in their houses or neighborhood, call the attention of the Medical Officer of Health, or the Inspector of Nuisances to it.—*Dr. Hessey. (In Boston apply to the Board of Health, 32 Pemberton Square.)*

The elevation of the poor in their homes! How can we help towards it? How shall we each find the one little niche we are best fitted to fill, where earnestly and humbly we may work on, catching perchance, as we work, some little glimpse of God's immortal plan of bringing all His children nearer to him? —*Louisa Lee Schuyler.*

Above all, we need the *education of ourselves as visitors.* Now, in what does this education consist? First, we are educated for this work by our *homes and individual characters*; then by our *reading and reflection*, and lastly by *experience.*—*Susan H. Lesley.*

You want to know the poor, to enter into their lives, their thoughts, to let them enter into some of your brightness, to make their lives a little fuller, a little gladder. You might gladden their homes by bringing them flowers, or better still by teaching them to grow plants; you

might meet them face to face as friends; you might teach them; you might collect their savings; you might sing for and with them; might teach and refine and make them cleaner by merely going among them.—*Octavia Hill.*

From all the beauty which crowns our lives with loving-kindness, has no voice come to us bidding us gird ourselves anew for our life-work, and enjoining on us, both the duty and the privilege of converting the benefits we have received to the good of the poor, the weary, the over-worked, the sad, the inefficient and the vicious? —*Susan M. Lesley.*

But it is a mistake to believe that any letting of ourselves down will ever lift them up. The "hail fellow, well met" air which we sometimes see in those who would avoid condescension, often leads to rash relations with those we would benefit, and consequent disappointment. Let our poor friends rather see in our manner that we stand always ready, always on the alert to be their friends. — *Susan H. Lesley.*

I have sometimes been asked by rich acquaintances, whether I do not remember the words, "Never turn your face from any poor man." I may deserve reproach; I may have forgotten many a poor man, but I cannot help thinking that to give *oneself* rather than one's money to the poor, is not exactly turning one's face from him. — *Octavia Hill.*

Don't let us despise *enthusiasm*. There is more lack of heart than of brains. We agree with the Indian, who when talked to about having too much zeal said, "I think it is better for the pot to boil over, than not to boil at all." — *Congregationalist.*

But let us not be too impatient for *results*, it is not wise. Hope and faith are what we want—not *sight*. — *Susan H. Lesley.*

Since varieties of needs require varieties of treatment, it is not well for any visitor to lay aside as hopeless any family or individual, even when she has conscientiously done all she can. Said a good mother of a family to me once in a period of much perplexity about a portion of her brood: "I never think we parents have done our whole duty by our children if we have only given them *ourselves*. I thank God that I know of people who influence my children, where I fail. What I desire is that they get good influence, and what matters it whether it comes through me, or through some wiser person to whom I refer them." Would that in our relations to our poor friends we could imitate her wisdom. — *Susan H. Lesley.*

Will any one who once takes these views of charity, be willing to go back to alms-giving without investigation, or to the lazy and vicious way of taking money from their pockets to injure their brothers and sisters, rather than give their time, their patience, and their personal labor to the work of elevating these children of God? Surely it is not the will of our Father that one of these should perish. — *Susan H. Lesley.*

